

# Stafford Pharmacy and Home Healthcare

## February News

### Heart Health—Hypertension and You

#### What is hypertension?

Hypertension, also known as high blood pressure (BP), is when the pressure in your blood vessels is higher than normal.

#### How do I know if I have hypertension?

The only way to know if you have hypertension is to **measure your blood pressure regularly**. This can be done by your doctor at regular visits, using a machine in a pharmacy, or at home if you purchase a home blood pressure monitor.

Hypertension is known as the “silent killer” because most people with the disease have no symptoms. The disease usually comes on slowly over time, producing no symptoms. Rarely, patients experiencing a rapid and extremely high blood pressure will suddenly develop severe headaches.

#### What do blood pressure numbers mean?

There are two numbers in a blood pressure reading.

The highest number is the force of blood when your heart pumps, known as systolic BP. The lowest number, diastolic BP, is the pressure at its lowest when the heart is at rest.

For most people blood pressure should be below 140/90.

For those with diabetes or kidney disease blood pressure should be less than 130/80.

#### How common is hypertension?

Very common! **1 in 4 Canadians** have hypertension.

#### Why is diagnosing and treating hypertension important?

Hypertension is the **leading risk for premature death**.

Hypertension can cause the following if left untreated:

- Stroke
- Heart attack/heart failure
- Kidney failure
- Eye damage
- Dementia
- Sexual Dysfunction
- Early death

#### What causes hypertension?

Lifestyle is responsible for 60% of all cases of hypertension. Poor diet, lack of exercise, excess alcohol consumption, smoking and stress can all contribute to hypertension.

About 35% of people have hypertension due to genetics. The remaining 5% are due to underlying kidney disease or excessive use of aspirin-like drugs (NSAIDs).

#### What can you do to prevent hypertension from developing?

- Eat a healthy diet (following Canada’s Food Guide is a great way to start)
- Exercise regularly (30-60 minutes per day at least 4 days per week)
- Maintain a healthy body weight
- Be smoke-free
- Limit alcohol consumption
- Control stress

Not only can a healthy lifestyle prevent hypertension from occurring, but changing your lifestyle once diagnosed with hypertension can help to reduce blood pressure substantially.

#### How is hypertension treated?

Controlling your blood pressure reduces your risk of dying, having a heart attack or stroke, having kidney failure or developing eye disease.

If caught early, lifestyle modifications may be enough to reduce blood pressure. However, the majority of patients require one or more medications.

There are many different types of medications that are used to control blood pressure. Treatment is a lifetime affair. Even when blood pressure is controlled, those with hypertension must live a healthy lifestyle and take their medications regularly.

#### Get started right now!

**Check your blood pressure in the pharmacy and talk to your pharmacist about what the measurement means!**



For more information visit: [www.heartandstroke.ca](http://www.heartandstroke.ca) or [www.hypertension.ca/bpc](http://www.hypertension.ca/bpc)

Visit us on the web at: [www.staffordpharmacy.com](http://www.staffordpharmacy.com)

## Rx Center— Prescription Adaptations by your Pharmacist

When you bring a new prescription in to the pharmacy, it is the pharmacist's responsibility to ensure the medication prescribed is appropriate. The pharmacist will check if the medication is correct for the condition being treated. They will check the dose, frequency and duration of the prescribed medication. If an error is found, the prescription may need to be altered before it can be administered to the patient.

The ability of the pharmacist to adapt the prescription prevents the pharmacist from having to call the doctor, or have the patient go back in to see the doctor. This also ensures the medication is started as quickly as possible.

### What is a prescription adaptation?

When the pharmacist understands

the condition being treated and feels confident to assess the patient, they may adapt a prescription if they feel it was written incorrectly. For example, the dose of a medication may be too high or too low for a particular patient.

### I think the dose of my current medication is too low, can the pharmacist increase it?

No. The pharmacist can only adapt brand new prescriptions for a few reasons.

### When can the pharmacist change the dose of a NEW prescription?

The pharmacist can alter the dose if the adjustment is required due to the patient's **age, weight, or organ function**. For example, if your child weighs 20 kg, but the doctor calculated the dose of their anti-biotic based on the weight of

the child at the last visit, say 10 kg, then the pharmacist can alter the dose because of the weight.

### Why is the pharmacist's name on my prescription bottle instead of the doctor's?

Once a pharmacist adapts a prescription, they become the prescriber. The responsibility of the prescribed medication now falls with the pharmacist.

### Will my doctor be told about the change made to the prescription?

If the pharmacist changes the dose of the medication they must notify the original prescriber. The pharmacist who changes the dose must notify the doctor of the type and amount of the drug prescribed, the rationale for the change and the instructions to the patient.



## Supplement Spotlight—Fish Oils

### What are other names for this remedy?

Other names include omega-3 fatty acids, docosahexaenoic acid (DHA) and eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA).

### What is fish oil?

The omega-3 fatty acids are essential fatty acids. That means that your body needs them to be healthy, but cannot make them. Therefore fish oils must be obtained through the diet. They are found in cold-water fish. Sources include: cod, tuna, salmon, shrimp, halibut, shark and mackerel.

### What is the role of fish oil in the body?

Fish oils play a crucial role in brain

function, as well as normal growth and development. They are natural anti-inflammatories and are used to treat and prevent diseases caused by inflammation.

### Who should supplement with fish oils?

People who don't eat at least 2 servings of fish per week may want to consider supplementing with fish oils.

Fish oils are also used in the following conditions:

- Heart disease
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Arthritis

- Crohn's, ulcerative colitis, inflammatory bowel disease

- And many more!

### Are there side effects to supplementing?

Fish oils may cause gas, bloating, belching and diarrhea. People with bleeding disorders or who are taking blood thinners should avoid taking fish oils.

### Do fish oils interact with medications?

Fish oils can interact with many medications so check with your pharmacist to see if they are safe for you!

